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ABSTRACT

A definitional statement of "articulation" in education introduces a seven-point program aimed toward that end in foreign language curriculum planning. Considering a six-year program essential for mastery of the target language, the author comments on the proper achievement of articulation through: (1) clearly defined goals, (2) proper supervision, (3) sequential planning, (4) syllabi for each level, (5) properly selected materials, (6) unified basic methodology, and (7) proper testing. A recommended foreign language basic methodology course outline for 14 college class meetings stresses the necessity of planning a unified program. (RL)

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TOWARD IDEAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE ARTICULATION

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In a speech before the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools at Memphis, Tennessee, in December 1960, Stephen Romine, Dean of the School of Education, said, "If private, creative enterprise operated with no more articulation and coordination than typically characterizes American education, it would fail or go bankrupt. The assembly of an automobile, the farming of a tract of land, the construction of a home, and the orchestration of a musical composition, as examples, require careful planning and persistent evaluation aimed at efficiency and relatedness of effort. Millions of dollars are spent annually for this type of articulation. Is the education of our young men and women less important?"[1]

What is articulation? In education articulation is the "coordination of all aspects of a program of instruction," including "objectives, methods, materials, testing, and teacher training" in an effort to provide a smooth transition "from one level to another" and "to achieve the desired results at each level."[2]

It is also the "coordination of effort in those areas in the field where there are joint concerns and responsibilities between more or less independent units. Good articulation insures smooth transition, continuity of the educative process, efficient development of pupils, and maximum use of resources.... It is a requirement in administration, curriculum guidance, instruction, and use of facilities.... It is needed from grade to grade, department to department, elementary school to high school, high school to institutions of higher learning."[3]

Principles of Articulation

"Language learning should be considered an integral part of the 'main stream' of American education. Pupils need to know that other people speak differently, think differently, react differently to different situations. This realization will help pupils achieve a meaningful understanding and appreciation of other cultures. To make possible the six-year sequence which is considered indispensable for a reasonable mastery of the language, a foreign language should be introduced in grade 7. Since the optimum age for language learning, however, is four to ten, the ideal foreign language program should begin in the early grades and be continued through grade 12. Less than five periods a week might suffice in certain segments of the sequence. To insure the proper implementation of these programs, there should be a foreign language advisory committee composed of elementary, high school, and college teachers. The continuous nature of language learning necessitates a supervisor responsible for the total program."[4]

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[1] C.W. Seay, "High School-College Articulated," Bulletin of NASSP, 48 (September, 1964), 57-61.

[2] Committee on Articulation, "Report - Foreign Languages," in NCEA Bulletin, 41 (February, 1965), 9-14.

[3] C.W. Seay, op.cit., 57-58.

[4] Committee on Articulation, op.cit., 9.

Proper Achievement of Articulation

1. Through clearly defined goals.

Since foreign languages have often been called the "bastards" of education, there should be a philosophy of foreign languages, specifically "geared" to the individual needs of each school system. An example of such philosophy follows:

> "The program of foreign language study in West Orange has been patterned so that it will be congruent with the interests, abilities, and needs of individual students. Its aim is towards making the foreign language curriculum more than just a ticket of admission to college and towards bringing instructional processes into conformity with recent developments in the psychology of learning and of language.
>
> This course aims further to contribute both to the development of language abilities and to stimulate the insights, attitudes, and appreciations significant to the individual as a member of the community. Furthermore, since language is conceived of as a means to an end, it is best acquired in terms of the ends it is eventually to serve. Therefore, pupils can experience immediately some eventual satisfactions (e.g., the ability to communicate in the foreign tongue) even while learning, as a safety device against diminishing the desire to learn. Language learning in this manner is thus a progressive experience as well as a progressive skill.
>
> In teaching modern foreign languages, this department purports to give pupils a cultural view of a country, such that some useful benefits will accrue to all pupils, regardless of whether or not they intend to pursue their studies beyond the high school level.
>
> It is believed by this department that knowledge of a foreign language will give Americans clearer insight into the origin, development, and meaning of their own language, especially insofar as it is influenced by foreign languages."[5]

2. Through proper supervision.

The foreign language supervisor should have complete authority to carry the above-mentioned goals to their ultimate end.

But the foreign language supervisor can do this only through the utmost cooperation of all administrators, guidance personnel, teachers, and parents.

It is imperative that these people have a "clear and realistic concept of the goals proper to each segment."[6]

In New York State, for example, each principal is completely in charge of his own school. In order to insure proper articulation, the foreign language supervisor should be given an opportunity in a superintendent's meeting, or through clearly defined directives, to orient administrators to the program's goals and "little or nothing" must interfere with these goals.

An administrator, possibly ignorant of foreign languages, once told a German teacher to discourage about twenty pupils from enrolling in an

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[5]Florence Long et al., Course of Study: Latin and Modern Languages, Grades 9-12 (West Orange, New Jersey Public Schools, 1960), no p.

[6]Committee on Articulation, op.cit., 10.

advanced class for the following year as there was room for only one class in the schedule plan. Another administrator once said that there would be a class "if only one pupil wanted it." Views like these could possibly break down the goals of proper articulation.

Guidance personnel, often obviously lacking an "adequate feeling" for foreign languages, openly discourage pupils from starting or continuing language study.

Many times, administrators, curriculum planners, or guidance personnel have had a "bitter dose" of language learning and thus implant their dislikes in the pupils they advise.

3. Through sequential planning.

"Provision should be made for continuity and articulation within the language sequence."[7]

Two guides, one for Spanish prepared by O.E. Perez,[8] and a general planning guide prepared by David Burns,[9] with the permission of the authors, could be properly adapted to any language or used as a basis for initial planning stages.

But who should take part in this planning? The foreign language supervisors, representing administration and the school board, teachers to be involved in the program, university or college liaison personnel for foreign languages, and parents, representing the community as a whole, should be heard in the initial planning of any program of such vital importance.

Long-range goals of the program should include college needs and aims and these goals must be considered at all times. Uniquely, a two-track system of scheduling - for the college-bound and the noncollege-bound - is most appropriate.

Planning must include the consideration of the "dropins" or transfers from other programs. What will we do with these people? Are they to be punished or deprived because they have not been fortunate enough to pursue the program being offered?

Careful testing, by means of prognostic (for those not already in a foreign language program), cooperative (for proper placement of those in a regular program), or proficiency tests (for those in a comparable sequential program) must be administered when the pupil registers.

If proper testing or placing is not adequately performed, the pupil immediately feels insecure and presents, to counselors and parents alike, a variety of reasons for dropping the program. Two articles worth noting on this subject were prepared by John Dusel[10] and Jane Motley.[11]

But let us get back to the program itself. A program can only be properly and smoothly achieved when goals are established for each level; for a "chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

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[7]Committee on Articulation, op.cit., 11.

[8]O.E. Perez, Sequential Approach to Teaching Spanish, Kindergarten Through High School (Tallahassee: Florida State University, no. d.), 1-37.

[9]David Burns, Expected Goals and Outcomes for the Three Levels of Foreign Language Teaching: Elementary Grades, Junior High, High School (Topeka: State Department of Public Instruction, 1959), 1-7.

[10]John Dusel, "Why The Foreign Language Dropouts?", FLANC Foreign Language Newsletter, 14 (May, 1966), 5-7.

[11]Jane Motley, "Who Are The Language Dropouts?", MLASC Forum, 6 (October, 1967), 9 & 11.

Within the kindergarten through high school continuum it is imperative that there is close coordination between and within various grade levels, as articulation is "horizontal as well as vertical."[12]

Language meetings within grades as well as with other grade level teachers are essential. However, meetings too frequently called will tend to "kill" the purpose of such meetings.

Programs designed to articulate an easy flow into universities and colleges should be planned well in advance.

Institutions of higher learning have been and will continue to be faced with many problems because of inadequate articulation with high schools. Problems such as (1) needless duplication of effort (e.g., the high school advanced placement programs and the college introductory courses may be the same), (2) an excessively high percentage of freshman failures, dropouts, or misfits (different methods are employed by both high schools and colleges), (3) poor understanding of the organization, standards, aims, strengths and weaknesses of the other level of education.

In education "scapegoating and buck-passing" have all too easily been resorted to. It is always easier to place the blame on a previous teacher or institution than it is to bear the burden of one's own blame.

Articulation is of the utmost importance on a college-to-college basis, especially in the case of transfers and in particular with junior college transfers. Things to be considered include (1) what is the status of the junior college transfer applicants in competing with entering freshmen for admission?, (2) should they be given priority over incoming freshmen?, (3) should there be quotas?, (4) if so, what will happen to those not admitted?

4. Through syllabi for each level.

I again cite the work of O.E. Perez as it is a text as totally sequential in scope as any I have seen.

Syllabi for each level, although they may range from a few pages to several, are a must. These should include basic texts to be used, essential material to be covered and, if possible, sample lesson plans for various aspects of the curriculum.

Here the help of the teachers of advanced levels who have formerly taught the earlier levels is essential. This will also add to good public relations within the department as these teachers will feel a sense of pride in stating their views and having them considered.

It would, of course, be extremely helpful for teachers to share materials - either those which they have obtained from various sources or those which they have produced themselves through the years - as often as possible. But I say "share", as it is not fair to nor should it be expected of experienced teachers to give up materials which they have developed, through teaching, over a period of time.

Also to be considered for inclusion in the syllabi are "tricks of the trade" which have helped to put certain material across to the pupils, thus making it easier for them to grasp that particular aspect of the subject matter.

A list of available materials, through a well-organized bibliography, should round out the syllabi.

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[12]Stanley Levenson, Readings in Foreign Languages for the Elementary School (Waltham: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1967), 404.

5. Through properly selected materials.

For best determination of suitable materials for class use all teachers, either initially or before a final decision has been reached, should play an integral part in the selection.

But the burden of evaluating materials should fall on a committee of teachers of each language at various levels. However, ultimate decision should be left to the foreign language supervisor as this person is the closest to the financial aspect from an administrative viewpoint.

The curriculum coordinator of the local college or university should be consulted while the main body of work is going on. Requests for preview materials will be honored by nearly every publishing or manufacturing firm.

An acquaintance with MLA's Selective List of Materials and supplements is essential.

Bibliographies of reference works, textbooks, or current periodicals should be consulted constantly. For foreign language material from abroad, reference should be made to Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and to the Cumulative Book Index, among others. Often much valuable material is easily obtainable either for general reference or for supplementary material for class use. The Canisius College Language Methods Newsletter[13] often carries good reviews of language materials from abroad.

Again, a close liaison with the local college language methods teacher would probably be most beneficial.

6. Through a unified basic methodology.

Can there be a unified basic methodology? This has been a long sought goal of many educators. I have proposed, and have been granted permission, to conduct a seminar where language methods teachers - of extremely varied talents - could meet and "iron out" problems or discuss a mutual program. Later, it is hoped that area foreign language chairmen might be invited to participate in discussions.

The teacher's methodology in the classroom will reflect, naturally, the methods course to which she was subjected while in college. Methods courses have varied from one which deals strictly with translation (or the equivalent of another literature course) - which one teacher feels is the only way to teach - or one which merely compares the Lord's Prayer in several languages to one which is an all-inclusive study of language teaching. This last methods course, which I feel is most effective, could be worked as follows:

Class 1	Organization: course outline, assignments to be prepared (guidance brochures, test questions, complete final exams, etc.)
Class 2 3	Concepts: audio-lingual, traditional, mixed or modified approaches; chief proponents of the methods (Latin: Distler, Most, Gerdocki; modern languages: Lado, Brooks, Stack, Rivers, Birkmaier, etc.); program learning, Credif materials, etc.
Class 4	Essentials: lesson planning, homework, discipline and class management, etc.

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[13]Edward L. Kruse, Jr., ed., Canisius College Language Methods Newsletter, Buffalo, New York.

Class 5 Skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing and how to prepare materials in each
Class 6 Methods: pattern drills, aural and oral comprehension, structural changes, etc.
Class 7 Language Laboratory: its operation and use
Class 8 Audio-visual aids: availability of aids and equipment, leading publishers and distributors, demonstrations by college's audio-visual department, etc.
Class 9, 10 Demonstrations: students in class will be required to demonstrate methods studied using other class members as "students," experienced teachers in area will be invited to demonstrate methods proper to specific languages; etc.
Class 11, 12 Materials: text publishers; copies of all available FLES, junior, senior high, and basic college texts to be examined; materials (realia) to be examined, etc.
Class 13, 14 Testing: Lado, Pimsleur, Valette, MLA, etc., to be studied; school quizzes, unit tests and finals to be studied, etc.

But what value is good methodology training if the teacher is not willing to accept these methods? It is extremely difficult to "budge" a teacher from past practices and often, as the saying goes, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Most modern texts come equipped with teacher's manuals, many of which are priceless in the views they present for teaching the foreign language. Yet these, too, must be closely scrutinized and the beginning teacher should be alerted to the pitfalls contained therein.

It has been said that a teacher - inexperienced, to say the least - because the text presented the subjunctive in the first lesson of a first level text, felt that the subjunctive should be thoroughly studied at that time. This is definitely not the case.

A teacher should not subject a pupil, trained in the Fundamental Skills approach for one to two or more years, to an outdated method unless this method can be somewhat tied-in with the foreign language program. Many of the old methods still have, with slight alteration, a very essential place in teaching foreign language today.

Teaching translation from English to the foreign language has little or no place in today's teaching. Why is this? Mainly because we today are undertaking an entirely different goal - that of conversation and comprehension. Much of the vocabulary is very unfamiliar to the pupil and, as we all will readily acknowledge, for the pupil the first words in a dictionary for the translation of a given English word will suffice, since the pupil as yet has no grasp of semantics.

How can we with today's goals in mind accomplish the same thing? One way, of course, which I have tried, and with which I have found good success, is to have the pupil compose a prose passage (indirect speech) from a conversation or compose a conversation from a prose passage. This also gives the pupil a sense of security in what he is doing.

But, again, <u>all</u> teachers in a program should be using this method.

7. Through proper testing.

I do not propose here to go too deeply into the many available commercial tests.

However, testing should be uniform. In the earlier stages testing by visual material alone, as the California Common Concepts Foreign Language Test, or tests published by Extracurricular Programs or by publishers abroad may be advantageously employed.

Although the type of test to be used should be determined beforehand, the use should lie with the individual teacher.

Later stages of language learning may employ the many examples of testing devices which are available. Many or all of these should be tried. However, it is essential that proper coordination of testing take place at all times.

Here, adequate articulation is imperative to insure the continued success of the program.

Conclusion.

Articulation, then, is the clarity and cohesiveness of planning and teaching a foreign language.

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